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Russian Literary Process in the 1760-1770s: Novel as a Representative of Interconnection of Epistemic Reproductive Models

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Abstract

The paper deals with the Russian literary process in the middle of the 18th century and correlation of the genre of a novel with the system of classicistic genres. The emphasis is placed on the novel as a representative of the epistemological transition from the dual philosophical literary reality patterns having a monolingual code to the ternary bilingual model of interconnection between non-literary reality and its literary model. This resulted in the durable idea of identity and replaceability of literature and reality in the Russian aesthetic consciousness.

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1. Introduction

The literary process in the XVIII century, defined as a whole body of texts written from 1700 till 1799, has been traditionally studied on the basis of the monographic principle or historical and literary one and has been considered as a sequence of change of literary methods used in the works of different authors. The methodological principle on the basis of which the literary process is being addressed in the present article is determined by the idea once expressed by the French philosopher M. Foucault: the principle of the nomination and intended nature of the relations between the nominee and the nominate (words and things) serves as a universal basis forming a single

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model of all types of reproductive world images in every historical and cultural period (episteme).

Foucault defined three major new periods in the European culture as the Renaissance episteme (the nominative principle, i.e. the identity of words and things; the word, i.e. a symbol of things); the episteme of classical rationalism (the word and the thing identified in the representation space, where the word acts as the image of the thing), and the modern episteme (the language is positioned between the word and the thing; in this case it went beyond the representation space and became the object in need of nomination, that is, the language includes the features of both words and things; the word acting as a sign of things) (Foucault, 1966).

In this cornerstone of Foucault's theory our attention is drawn to two points: 1). If two early epistemes are defined by terminology and meaning, and the definition is based on general cultural (Renaissance) and philosophical (rationalism) concepts, the third is correlated only with a more or less certain historical period. 2). The latter differs from the previous two in structural terms: both Renaissance and rationalist epistemes are dual models, each having one exclusive code description. As it concerns the modern ternary structure, it has two independent coding systems collocated using a mid-level (the language) which partially combines the features of both codes and acts as the independent and original coding system (Lotman, 1992).

Taken from this perspective, the aim of the article is to analyze the regularities of the Russian literary process in the late XVIII century in view of the epistemological turning point which determined a change in aesthetic criteria for the literary works and the readership's reception of the literary text.

2. Methodology

2.1. *The Structure of Analysis*

After establishing the parameters of regular correspondence of the reproductive models of the modern episteme and the features of the philosophical and literary world modelling (an abstract conceptual image of the reality and thingish-substantive image of the reality, correspondingly), we further highlight the role of literature for the Russian aesthetic consciousness as not only an image of reality but also its equivalent. Innovations in the genre repertoire in the late XVIII century allow to trace the process of change in the understanding of the aims that the new genres which became alternatives to the genre system of the classic rationalism episteme sought to achieve. A new representational genre for the Russian literary process of the XVIII century proved to be the novel which infiltrated the Russian literature at that time as a representative of the modern episteme world-image and an indicator of the new perception of the world and its modelling.

2.2. *The Interaction of Philosophy and Literature as Reproductive Models*

From a historical perspective, the epistemological turn in the European aesthetic consciousness, i.e., complexity of a binary structure and its transformation into a ternary one, can be called a short period, and its change can be described as a process because chronologically it covers at least two centuries (the XVII and the XVIII). Their historical and cultural content can be described as "explosive" in all respects: first, this period is likely to be event-driven (the English and the French Revolutions, the reforms of Peter I); secondly, it is very rich in scientific terms (the age of the "universal encyclopaedia"), and it is undoubtedly impressive from the aesthetic viewpoint (literature-centricity and rapid flowering of liberal arts).

This period is determined by a semantic intersection of two main philosophical currents of the period: the classical rationalism (Cartesianism that represents a dual monolingual model prevailing in the XVIII century, i.e. 'mind-feeling') and sensationalism (a ternary structure with two coding systems that started to dominate in the XVIII century, i.e. 'feeling-emotion-thought'). Their co-existence is fraught with semantic explosion depending on which particular philosophical current currently has an ideologically central or a peripheral position. This causes a modification of the epistemological structure as a whole and its transformation coding system when a polymorphic syncrisis of the Renaissance Culture and a dual, but monolingual universe of rationalism are transformed into a new unity of a higher order.

From this perspective, the exclusive role of belles-lettres becomes apparent, with its immanent use of language as a means of reverse translation and the intermediate coding system. Thus, belles-lettres initially enjoys the kind of

functional connection between the word and the thing that is maturing as a methodological basis of so-called modern episteme. Perhaps it could be described by the term literature-centricity. Neither before nor after this period did literature play such an important role in the European spiritual life. The prerequisites and conditions of such cultural world order were formed in the XVII and XVIII centuries and were later implemented in the first half of the XIX century. It is the time when spiritual leaders of the nation became writers; their literary reputation being so impressive (from Goethe to Byron and Hugo, from Lomonosov to Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Chekhov); their power over the minds of the contemporaries and immediate descendants was obvious proving the fact that Europe did not know such literature either before or after the described historical and philosophical change.

A predominant role of belles-lettres in the age of epistemological turn is determined by the fact that literature which is perceived by mass aesthetic consciousness not as a model but rather as a true and adequate image of non-literary reality, has the ability to function and to explicate abstract explanations of philosophical reflection in the genre model which acts as the matter of artistic imagery of the literary text, all these being the categories of specific and more affordable profane perception. The same perspective of the reality and the same concept drawn underneath this reality in philosophy and literature are embodied as a kind of ‘word’ (abstract philosophical thesis) and ‘thing’ (a specific artistic image), making it clear that the latter is likely to be a more available perception of mass consciousness. The position and function of literature in the literature-centered episteme become especially vivid when the national culture does not yet have the original philosophy as a differentiated field of knowledge. However, it has the original literature that successfully fills that lack with its own means in the Russian literature of the new time and especially during the XVIII century. In this case, the genre becomes a representative aesthetic category that makes it possible to track compliance with a regular literary world image making it the philosophical and epistemological synchronous reproductive model. In the Russian literature of the XVIII century, the 1760-1770s seem to be the most semantically rich since this period is marked by such outstanding authors as Trediakovsky, Lomonosov, and Sumarokov. However, there appears a new generation of so-called ‘petty’ writers who bring a new genre phenomenon, a novel, which, in its fundamental innovation with respect to the previous episteme, starts to enjoy the reputation of a life-constructing explosive phenomenon; its role in the European spiritual atmosphere of XVII-XVIII centuries seems to be comparable to the importance of social upheavals of this historical period.

3. Discussion of Results

A new age of the Russian literature preceding the 1760s demonstrates the obvious unity of literary and philosophical models of the reproductive episteme of classical rationalism which represents the reality as a binary structure that includes the upper world of innate concepts (primary ideal reality) and the lower world of objects (secondary material reality). The only description code of this structure is the mind that generates the representation space where there may be a link between the words (innate ideas) and things (objects of the material world). Therefore, the mind is the only artistic reception tool, and a source of aesthetic pleasure. Accordingly, the genre system in literature is clearly divided into two hierarchical levels of high and low, each of which has an exclusive right to simulation of one of the levels of reality. This system is represented as the opposition of two older genres of the new Russian literature: the satire and the solemn ode that are interrelated on the basis of antonymic couples: they are united in their genre model ascending to rhetorical genres of secular literature of the Petrine Age (oratory prose by Theophane Prokopovich). Despite their common basis, they seem to produce the images of reality diametrically opposed to the ethical and aesthetic sense. The satire creates the *thingish* world-image of chaotic aggregate of disparate perverse things, events and characters while the solemn ode simulates an abstract conceptual world of the cosmogonic ideal, where everything is logical and interconnected. In the dynamic aspect of the same genre both create an entirely monological model. The satire depicts a material reality out of the process where the dynamics is conceived outside the genre and the text: the satire is intended to eradicate the nominees from the material reality by the very act of nomination, which results in destruction of the teleological setting. The ode, on the contrary, often displays the exaggerated dynamics: its preferred semantic motif is represented by a ‘verb-adverb’ combination, the word ‘suddenly’ being the most frequent element. The themes of the ode demonstrate astonishing commitment to acts of sudden onset of ‘*something out of nothing*’, and this is a verbal model expected for the same dynamics outside the genre and the text.

The material equivalent of the odic abstract concepts should suddenly emerge along with the spells of the ode in the material reality; that is why the ode actually uses the words of the real language and is more inclined to represent the word as an absolute semantic neologism in paradoxical and non-traditional use (Tynyanov, 1977).

However, no matter how different these world images might seem at first glance, according to their type of connection with the nominees, they are identical. Both older genres, being the products of the highest spiritual capacity, (the mind) and correlated with it in the same communicative aspect occupy a higher hierarchical position in relation to the reality, which is expressed by the imperative and didactic tone. A non-literary literary model of the reality speculatively constructs its image and likeness and requires immediate self-reorganization consistent with the rational construct. This type of relationship between words and things in the rationalist episteme triggers the function of the word belonging to literary texts, and the status of things to the non-literary reality, and the Russian literature produces new poetic genres (tragedy and comedy) on the basis of the satire and the ode.

The twirls of the literary process of the 1760s become an indicator of the underlying changes in the Russian humanitarian culture thus marking a redistribution of power in the literary and polemical front. The founders and live classics of the Russian literature, such as Trediakovsky, Lomonosov and Sumarokov being antagonists in terms of self-consciousness, discuss the principle of nomination in the literal and figurative expression, comparing the controversy between Lomonosov and Sumarokov concerning the boundaries of the odic word usage (Gukovsky, 1936), the polemic between Trediakovsky and Sumarokov about a constructive basis of the drama genre model (Kunik, 1865). Quite unexpectedly, they unite their efforts against the new polemical and 'malefic' genre (Sumarokov, 1787), i.e. a novel which rapidly wins priority positions in literature first as translations and later as originals. This unique example of mutual understanding and ideological unanimity of the recent subjective ideological rivals enables us to see the potential aesthetic phenomenon of the novel that threatens the very foundations of their common epistemological position. The genre structure of the early Russian novel represents, to some extent, the reminiscence of the previous types of artistic imagery: since the novel stands on the so-called 'democratic' (marginal) line of development of the Russian literature the material world playing a crucial role in it (Kurilov, Shatalov, Lebedev, Sakharov, 1982; Lebedeva, 2003). On the other hand, according to the absolute preference of narration from the first person (autobiographical notes and epistolary), the word belonging to the hero is placed a special emphasis on in the novel, thus being marked, as in the ode, by the evidence of individual use. However, the functionality of these traditional ways of organizing intersemiotic connection in the literary text with non-literary reality is different from the previous tradition of fundamentally new, which becomes most evident in the specifics of the narrative structure and the purpose of the text of the novel.

The nature of the functional novelty can be characterized as the purpose of using well-known methods which cease to be means of discrediting (material world), or apology (verbal spiritual world image) of the character. On the one hand, they become the way of describing, and on the other hand, the way to explain this character placed in a causal relationship with the environment, yet having the form of a binary structure, since the character is derived directly from environmental conditions. The intermediate level implied by the context of the novel, namely, the process of acquiring certain experiences by the hero by means of rethinking and reconsideration of these experiences and their appropriateness are not yet available in the novel as plain text of a psychological narrative; however, it is implied by maximum mentalized forms of narrative from the first person thus accentuating the speech of the hero.

This language begins to go beyond the representation space and acquire independent objective existence in the speech of the 'democratic' hero of the novel. The former does not perceive his speech as the artefact, which does not prevent the author of the novel from perceiving the speech of the hero in this particular way and hiding himself and his creative mind behind the profane but creative speech production of the hero's consciousness.

This raises the following modification of the reproductive model of the advancing episteme: these operations inevitably result in equalization of the status of the three formerly rigid hierarchical subjects in the literary and communicative situation. In the first place, this is the author who refuses to assess the hero and communicates his creative function; secondly, this is the hero who appeals to readers on his own behalf and if he does not acquire the status of a real person, he presents a carefully modeled illusion; and, finally, the reader, who is partially likened to the author in focused perception as co-creation, extremely productive even in the earliest texts of the Russian novel, and partly to the hero who is likely to occupy the same level of reality with the reader.

Thus, we can say that a novel in its plain text does not seek to endow the life with its perfect image, or to eradicate its vices. The novel seeks to understand and reflect life in its obvious forms, and ideally imitate it,

absorbing the inherent properties of non-literary reality as the text elements of genre genesis: procedurality, incompleteness, and dynamism. As for the latter, the novel is diametrically opposed to static genres of the previous episteme withdrawing the dynamics beyond the text. At the same time, the novel explicates the properties of the literary text; here the relation to the real biography as an artifact and a desire to organize life under the laws of a literary text seems to be latent teleology of indirect ways of influencing the reader's consciousness which already carries the earliest examples of the Russian novel refusing straightforward didacticism of genres without backing down on the desire to influence the reader.

The additional code becomes a semantic center of the literary explosion; however, it does not abolish the rationalist principle of cognition and communication, but fits into this binary structure as its middle element. Sensationalist epistemology that places the feeling and emotion between the subject and the idea as a structural transition stage from things to words has caused aesthetic reorientation of literary works. This does not trigger transition from the mind of the recipient to his feeling; however, it mediates the rational goal of literary communication by means of emotions. It is this state of things that a priori embodies the early Russian novel in its philosophical reflection on the Russian cultural ground, and not only in its structure but also partly in aesthetic reflection: the novel about the novel, becoming one of the faces of its plot, the text about the text forming an integral structural element.

Introducing psychophysiological factor of sensations and emotions into a relationship of the subject and the object of knowledge, previously regulated only by a single source of logical operations of the thinking mind, sensationalism outlines fundamental cognitive bilingualism, and hence reproductive mechanisms. The bilingualism of coding systems certainly needs a reliable mechanism of their interaction which inevitably arises as soon as a monolingual code is converted at least in a bilingual one.

4. Conclusion

The sensationalist epistemologically reproductive model with its bilingual descriptive code has created a situation of intersemiotic translation for the first time in the history of the European culture (Jakobson, 1985) which immediately generated the middle tier performing the functions of reverse translation of one coding system to another. This function was taken up by belles-lettres; in the Russian literature the described model was presented for the first time by the genre model of the novel which functions not only as a symbol, image, sign, or even a non-literary model of reality, but as its equivalent, or even as a complete analogue. It was not fortuitous that the leitmotif aesthetic aphorisms of the nearest subsequent period of the Russian literature may seem divergent in their literary form but common in their sense when it concerns the assimilation of literature and life: "I am both living and writing feeling free and free..." (Griboedov, 1971), "Live as you write" (Zhukovsky, 2004), "And he lived as he wrote" (Batyushkov, 1989); "The Life and Poetry is one thing" (Zhukovsky, 2000), "Blessed are those who left // the feast of life, // not drinking up their cups of wine, // Who have not read the novel of this life up to the end..." (Pushkin, 1937-1959). With his characteristic finality of poetically articulated maxim, Pushkin secured the identity of the genre with a life model with a simulated reality at the climax of the novel text in the Russian literature.

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